

Bodmin Moor Project Diary 1996.

MATT
WAKE

Day 1.
3/8/96. After arriving an unusual whole hour before my departure time at Paddington Train Station, I left London, bound for Exeter. I was expecting to be met by a red ice cream van, but instead Crystal from the Anthropology side met me and we made our way to the camp site at Camelford. Once settled into the 6 berth tent I had hired I went to find the project directors. I was slightly bemused that a meeting or debriefing had not been arranged for that evening, or that there was no appointed time or place to meet in the morning. In the evening I went to the camp bar with Crystal where we met some others from the project. It was very interesting talking to them, and even more interesting was the keyboard entertainer Tony M. Later on there was a general consensus to invade Chris Tilley's and Barbara Bender's caravan, which was welcomed and by the end of the evening we had set a time and place to meet in the morning, this set my mind at ease and I returned to my tent to sleep.

Day 2
4/8/96. This was the first day that I saw the site. The closest parking was about 2-2½ miles away from the Lescornick hill, so we walked through the dramatic moorlands to get there. It took about ¾'s of an hour and proved a good exercise for the camera.

of ~~best~~ Lescernick Mill. The contrast of the chaotic mass of stone, mostly granite with a bit of quartz, in so many shapes and sizes, all over the higher slopes of the hill, and the bareness of the hills that surround it on all sides, literally a 360 degree enclosure broken up by gently sloping river valleys, is stunning, as is the effect of the granite peaks of Brown Willy and Rough Tor on the horizon. When all the group had arrived we sat down to discuss the landscape, both natural and modified, the history of settlement and also the, ~~more~~ "cosmological world", of the people that settled the area. This last subject was the most interesting and it was good to see a mixture of opinions and ideas. It is nice to be involved in a project where the opinions of everyone are considered valid, rather than those of people with notable reputations. Chris T and Barbara B gave us a tour of the settlements on the hill and the stone row at the bottom of the southern settlement.

In the afternoon I stayed to work on the excavation of the stone row termination. Some of it was already open but there was also some detouring and unblocking to do. I enjoyed the physical work after having spent months on the books, and getting to excavate the end of a stone row is a pleasure, I never thought I would get the chance, ace.

Days 3 & 4
5/6/96 During days 3 and 4 I was excavating on the stone row, terminal again. Apart from unblocking off the back fill of last years

excavation there was also a fair amount of de-turfing to do and my reputation as a de-turfer was getting impressive, maybe having two brothers as gardeners helped just a bit, but the ironic thing is, I've never de-turfed with my brothers, I just like a job you can put your back into.

Reports from the hill show the difference between this dig and most others. Mike from the Institute draws the ~~Traditionalist~~ drawing in as much as that it has no interpretation, it merely shows what one can see, where as the rest of the others on the project are adding interpretation to their drawings and making their own methodology as they go.

day 5
16/96

DAY OFF.

days 6/7
20/6/98

Both of these days I spent browsing off the root matter layer underneath the turf. Some interesting things have come up such as different soil types in the same layer. On Saturday (8th) we moved one of the "decommissioned" stones off the excavation and found it surprisingly easy with only 4 people. At the end of today (9th) I went up to hit 23 on the hill to do some browsing up there. Although there have been no finds so far it is good to see more of the wall rubble exposed, as before the walls looked a little insubstantial. As this is a more "broad thinking" project, I'd like raise a point or rather problem with the diary, it is also the

reason that days 3 & 4 and 6 & 7 are written together. With the walk back and the time it takes to get back to the tent, shower, cook & eat there is either a lack of time, energy or both, and it is nice to relax or socialize in the evening. Although I cannot promise to keep a daily diary for the rest of the dig, I will try to raise points and ideas.

Week 2.

As I said, I couldn't keep up a daily diary but here is week 2. Week 2 has been a mixed bag. I started off digging on the Monday up on hut 23. Tuesday was a wash out, those that tried to make it to the dig soon came back sopping and cold. I took advantage of the ~~rain~~ rain and mist to venture up to Rough Tor and noticed that some of the round houses on the slopes have large back stones opposite the doorways and one of the round dwellings was extremely large, perhaps a communal building. Another interesting thing about Rough Tor, but less easy to explain, is the energy. The reason I bring this up is because of discussions with Pipa and others about the difference in energies, or to use a happy word, vibes, between the stone row terminal and the settlements on the hill. The energy at Rough Tor is electric and the mood was enhanced by the fog as it ebbed and flowed.

Although I enjoyed the chance to go to Rough Tor evenely, this damp and miserable day was

considered as half of this weeks day off! This annoys me greatly and to make it worse the other half of our day off was spent being dragged around the other part of Bodmin Moor. I retreated early back to the car park and came back early with Anna and Pippa and still didn't get back until 7.30 pm, some day off!!! Not only could I not do my washing and sort out commitments such as postcards, I'm doing a full three weeks and therefore don't get a day off for almost two weeks, it was a nice idea to show us another part of Bodmin Moor, but did we really have a choice with everyone driving down to the Workers or staying on site? I did mention this to Barbara and who responded with an insensitive ~~but~~ hum hum. This seems to me a good example of a regime that says it welcomes other people's opinions, but is only really interested in their own agenda. If my annoyance over this matter was not very apparent it's because I try to be as professional as possible on site.

Friday and Saturday & I switched from digging to surveying on the western settlement. This meant walking the field boundary walls and noting possible shrines, sorry upright triangular and square stones, and looking for new features and cairns. It is very interesting that once one has got, one's eye in, you can see so many possibilities. It's very easy to get over excited

with the amount of 'significant' looking
 stones doctored around, which shows how
 very arbitrary alot of interpretations are.
 Sunday was much the same except that
 in the afternoon Henry, who I have been
 surveying with, was playing tour guide to
 the young archaeologists society who came
 in from the east. This gave me the
 chance to walk around by myself and
 look for possibilities on the table top of
 Lescernik Hill which feels like the roof
 of the world when your wandering
 around on your own. The outer wall we
 started on in the morning takes in alot
 of large grounders and connects with the
 natural outcroppings at the top, runs along
 the rim and dips down to cut off the
 quoit and the cairn and barrows from
 the western settlement. It's almost as if
 the top of the hill was divided off as
 a sacred or ritual space. On the top I
 noticed alot of standing and fallen
 triangular stones, there was also some
 horseshoe shaped looking features but best
 of all was what appears to be a
 large flat grounder surrounded by standing
 and half buried triangular stones. Tomorrow
 myself and Henry will have a closer look
 using Waynes cones before showing Chris T,
 better to be cautious and limit the investigation.
 Another bonus from today was arranging to
 have Tuesday off and work Thursday instead

missing page

knows the site well from the last two years they may even be able to ~~do~~ take care of such, bothersome, things as showing the various societies and groups that visit and are genuinely interested in what we are doing, after all some of them have lived and worked in the area all their lives, who's archaeology is it anyway!!!?

Monday - Wednesday of week 3.

Monday and Tuesday was spent going over the same walls as before, but on larger plans, I thought it was a bit strange that we didn't have these organized before the start of the project, but it did have an advantage as going over the same walls twice allowed myself and Henry to be more decisive over our decisions on what appeared more 'impressive' or 'significant' in the walls. We also surveyed the enclosure wall of the western settlement. This was much more substantial than the field and outer boundary walls we did before and had a different association of triangular uprights with ground. Surveying this wall raised some interesting questions over the chronology and symbolic nature, or otherwise, of the walls we had done before.

On Wednesday the pace was a lot slower, as in the morning Barbara and Chris I came to look at the enclosure wall and what our

methodology was and what we had been selective about. More tired than I thought, I fell into a dream filled sleep at dinner time, ~~Henry~~ Henry awoke me, by calling me 'Matthew', only my mother called me this when I had done something wrong as a child, most disorientating.

The afternoon was spent looking at the structures inside the western enclosure, their associations with grounders, upright stons, clearances and the like. This was done with Chris T, Wayne, Henry and myself. Whether other personal factors were involved or not I don't know, but by the end of the day Chris ~~T~~ reached the end of his tether and snapped over my arguing with him over his ideas and arbitrary decisions. It was quite flattering in a way that he let his anger and frustrations out on me, not that I was bothered of course, rather than someone more knowledgeable than me. I'm sure he'd find life rather boring if everyone agreed with him, and there was never any challenge, after all ~~that~~ how would we find our hidden depths if we weren't pushed to work through our ideas and what we believe. He might think I'm an irritating little shit, but there much more irritating big shits out there that actually think that their ideas are important!

Thursday - day off (Tuesday, footy started late so I worked)
 Argh a lye in at last!!!

FRIDAY & SATURDAY. - WRITTEN 02/08/96!

The last two days were backfilling days. The site was cleared and the landscape restored to ~~the~~ our ability, which seemed a bit marred by again organisational problems and a race against the clock. In the end though the project numbers dwindled as all returned to various parts of the outside world. There is a, 'living in bubble', feeling that grows when I am away digging, much the same as occurs between the members of a band or a theatre group on tour. This I think makes the whole experience that much more intense, this I feel is reflected in this diary.

It has been over a month since I have got back, it seems like only a week ago though (WHERE DOES THE TIME GO?), and in hindsight I feel the whole experience of the Bochara Field Project, was a good one. Yes I was disappointed with the lack of organisation and apparently missing hierarchy (unless one is God it is useful to know one's place in the scheme of things, if anything this allows us to gauge how much we should rebel), but I did extremely enjoy the moors and heather as part of them. The hands on work at the huts and the stone row terminal was an immense pleasure tempered by a mysterious sense of responsibility that issued from the ancient stones. The surveying work with

Henry was no less than mind blowing at times, as, the more we surveyed walls, looked for alignments and associations, the more there seemed to be going on in the layout, shape and features of the mass of granite stones.

I admit it is easy to criticise, maybe more so when a project such as this, is in its first few seasons because ideas and methods are still developing and can change dramatically. The project has a very interesting future, of which I would be pleased to play apart. Even if my future lays outside archaeology I will always have an interest in Bodulin Moor and its history. At some point I hope to work on Rough Tor with Henry, for a long time it was only this part of the Moors that wanted my memory, now there are twice more, Brown Willy and Lescernik.